



## FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3012320

Address: 3926 Aurora Avenue North

Applicant: Clark Design Group

Date of Meeting: Monday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Board Members Present: Joseph Hurley  
Kathryn Armstrong (substitute)  
Evan Bourquard (substitute)  
Salone Habibuddin  
Martine Zettle

Board Members Absent: Peter Krech  
Christina Pizana

DPD Staff Present: Shelley Bolser, substituting for Bruce P. Rips

### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Commercial One with a 40' height limit (C1-40)

Nearby Zones: North: C1-40 along the two block fronts of Aurora Ave. N.  
South: C-40 along the two block fronts of Aurora to N. 38th St.  
East: Lowrise 3 (LR3) and Lowrise 2 (LR2).  
West: LR2 along Linden Ave. N.



Lot Area: 36,271 square feet (.75 acres). The site descends roughly 16' from the northwest corner to the southeast. Along N. 40th the slope falls toward the east approximately six feet.

Current Development: Vacant

Access: Aurora Ave. N., North 40th St. and alley

Surrounding Development & Neighborhood Character: The site lies along the Aurora Ave. N. corridor. Commercial and single and multifamily residential uses front onto the street. To the south of the site, three houses border the subject property. Mostly two and three story multifamily apartments and townhouses sit to the east on the other side of the alley. Larger four-story commercial and multifamily buildings line Aurora Ave across N. 40th St. and N 39th St. A vacant parcel occupies the southeast corner of Aurora and N. 39th Streets. To the west, an eclectic mix of single family, small scale retail and office buildings are assembled on Aurora.

ECAs: No Environmentally Critical Areas

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a four story extended stay hotel with 125 guest rooms (some have multiple bedrooms) and approximately 125 parking spaces. Vehicular access is proposed for Aurora Ave. N. and the north/south alley behind the property.

## DESIGN PRESENTATION

The packets include materials presented at the design review meetings, and are available online by entering the project number (3012320) at this website:

[http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design\\_Review\\_Program/Project\\_Reviews/Reports/default.asp](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp).

The packets are also available to view in the project file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

**Mailing Address:** Public Resource Center  
700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019

**Email:** [PRC@seattle.gov](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

## DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant presented three alternative design schemes at the EDG meeting. Each of the schemes illustrates a sizeable drop-off area with two curb cuts and canopy approximately in the middle of the Aurora block. Each option also shows a four-story building with a parking plinth on the southern half (visible on the south and east elevations) and three stories of hotel rooms. The northern half of the proposed structure houses semi-public rooms for hotel guests (meeting rooms, exercise room and pool, business center) and three floors of hotel rooms above it. The hotel parking garage is accessed from the alley. Option A, shaped like an elongated “I” has a central wing housing the entry and lobby area behind an extended drop-off area. Two smaller, perpendicular wings flank the central wing on the north and south. These approach both the east (alley) and west (Aurora Ave) property lines. Behind the central wing, the designers locate an outdoor patio area and a narrow bank of open space along the east property line.

For Option B, the hotel program remains essentially the same. In plan, the building shape resembles a squared-off number “2”. The guest drop-off area, located slightly toward the north along Aurora Ave., extends deeper into the site pushing the lobby roughly 55 feet from Aurora Ave. Guest services remain located along the north end of the site near grade along Aurora Ave. and N. 40<sup>th</sup> St. Similar to Option A, the parking garage reveals itself near the houses bordering on the south and along the east property line.

Option C modifies the approach of Option B. The curb cuts and the guest drop-off occur toward the south end of the site facing Aurora. The bulk of accessory uses (meeting rooms, pool and exercise room) lies north of the entrance. Similar to the second option, the drop-off area is deeper and quite wide to accommodate buses from the expected cruise ship business. The northern mass comes directly out to Aurora Ave. and N. 40<sup>th</sup> St. The southern section, which appears to interlock with the northern half at the center of the site, steps back to accommodate the drop-off area and then forms a large wall that approaches the south property line and then turns to the alley.

By the Recommendation meeting, the applicant had refined the project to move the vehicular entry in the alley slightly to the north. The applicant explained that moving it very far to the north would result in internal ramping to either remove the patio or break the connections between the lobby and the outdoor patio. An additional garage entry was added from the entry plaza drive, in order to reduce the vehicle trips on the alley by 26%. The entry plaza will also accommodate vehicles such as cars, taxis, and tour busses.

In response to Seattle Department of Transportation comments, the Aurora Ave N public right of way showed a wider landscape buffer between the curb and sidewalk with reduced landscaping between the sidewalk and building.

The applicant placed hotel amenity areas such as a fitness room, pool, and meeting rooms at the Aurora Ave N and N. 40<sup>th</sup> St frontages and located the pool farther below grade than the other

amenities in order to provide pool users with a sense of comfort. The building would be set back at the southeast corner to provide a landscaped buffer for hotel rooms at grade.

The area near the south property line showed an emergency access with a decorative fence to provide security.

A series of three tiered planters with landscaping were proposed to provide privacy and separation for residents across the alley by interrupting the visual connection between the patio and the alley.

The alley façade included a garage wall, a trash/recycling entry, and ornamental stone walls with landscaping separating the patio/courtyard from the alley. The alley slope would result in the guest rooms facing the alley to be located at least 8' above the alley surface. The south half of the alley facing façade included hotel rooms above grade. The north half (north of the garage entry) included amenity spaces close to grade.

The proposed materials attempt to accentuate the idea of 'peeling back' the harder edge at Aurora to the interior of the site. The street level façade included increased transparency and exposed columns. Materials include stucco panel in three brown/beige colors and ornamental stone. The stucco board was chosen because it sheds dirt, which is needed at Aurora Ave N. The street level included a bronze finish storefront window with dark brown vinyl windows on the upper level hotel rooms.

The applicant explained that the company's Staybridge signage would be used, even though the architectural style departs from the company's typical architectural style. The lighting plan showed direct sconces at Aurora and 40<sup>th</sup> St, with fully shielded lighting at the alley facing residences.

The massing steps down with grade with a taller mass north of the courtyard entry and a smaller 3-story mass near the south property line.

Landscape plans included a rooftop deck as well as planting at grade to soften the edge at Aurora and reduce the traffic noise. The interior courtyard included a fireplace and planting. Lighted bollards would be used at the courtyard entry, with surface paving treatments for interest. The surface would have a smooth finish to avoid noise from rolling luggage.

The rooftop deck would be located at the southeast corner to take advantage of the views to downtown, Mt. Rainier, and Lake Union. The roof deck may also include a gravel dog run or off-leash area near the southwest corner. Pavers would be used at the roof deck surface, with larger planters and trees at the north, east, and west edges of the roof deck. The southeast corner of the rooftop deck was left open to take advantage of the views.

The southwest corner of the site would include rain gardens, low stepped retaining walls, and landscaping to buffer the interior of the site from Aurora Ave N.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ten members of the public affixed their names to the mailing list. Speakers at the forum raised the following issues:

1. The design should respond to the residences to the south (at N. 39<sup>th</sup> St); it appears to only respond to the conditions to the north and east.
2. The location of the rooftop terrace impacts the privacy of adjacent backyards to the south and southeast.
3. If the project butts up to the alley, it doesn't leave enough alley width for circulation, given existing surface parking for residents across the alley (several comments listing concerns of adequate traffic circulation in the alley).
4. Rapid ride may not be able to stop on this block due to this new development.
5. On-street parking will be lost with the curb cuts on Aurora.
6. Removal of trees on site would be unfortunate.
7. There should be sufficient loading area for delivery vehicles in the alley.
8. There should be sufficient trash/recycling storage and access.

## **PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS**

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance. The Board identified the Citywide Design Guidelines of highest priority for this project.

### **Deliberation:**

- Garage entrance: (A-4, A-5, A-8, C-5, D-2, D-8, D-11)
  - The Board discussed the proposed garage entry and the various diagrams of alternate garage locations shown by the applicant.
  - The Board noted that there may be other garage entry locations not shown by the applicant that could locate the garage entry further north than the preferred alternative, which would reduce impacts to nearby neighbors.
  - The Board recommended a condition related to further study of this item, and left the decision to the DPD Land Use Planner.
  - The Board noted that the result should minimize vehicular impacts to nearby residential neighbors and should allow for maximum transparency and human activity at the N. 40<sup>th</sup> St façade.
- Material articulation (materials) how it relates to the architectural concept (A-2, C-2, C-4)
  - The concept of peeling the orange is appropriate
  - The Board noted a preference for a consistent application of materials and expression (orientation of columns same direction, etc.), but declined to make a specific recommended condition about this item.

- The Board noted that a metal panel shell would be more consistent with the 'peeling an orange' architectural concept, but a smooth panel would achieve a similar visual impression. The Board recommended a smooth panel on the shell of the structure.
- Roof deck (A-5, E-3)
  - The Board noted that the view from the rooftop deck will only be visible when people are standing, and the lack of landscaped buffer near the southwest corner of the deck may result in patrons gathering at the edge of the deck and increasing the impacts to privacy of neighboring residences.
  - The Board noted that a 6-8' planting buffer with low plants at the edge would maintain views for standing roof deck users, but provide some privacy for residents to the south and east.
  - The Board recommended a condition to provide a landscaped buffer edge at the roof deck. The applicant should demonstrate to the LU Planner how the landscape buffer will interrupt sight lines to adjacent residences but provide views of the skyline for hotel users.
  - The Board noted that another option is to locate the roof deck further north on the building, to the higher four-story module. This would provide clear views and minimize privacy impacts to adjacent neighbors.
- Transition to edge conditions (commercial zone adjacent to lower zone, and single family residences/duplex uses) (A-2, B-1, C-2, C-4, E-2, E-3)
  - The Board acknowledged that the alley facing patio helps to reduce height bulk and scale impacts to adjacent residents
  - Maintenance of landscaping is crucial.

**Recommendations:** The recommendations summarized below were based on the plans and models submitted at the June 4th, 2012 meeting. Design, siting or architectural details not specifically identified or altered in these recommendations are expected to remain as presented in the plans and other drawings available at the June 4, 2012 public meeting.

After considering the site and context, hearing public comment, reconsidering the previously identified design priorities, and reviewing the plans and renderings, five (5) Design Review Board members recommended APPROVAL of the subject design. The Board recommends the following CONDITIONS for the project. (Authority referred in the letter and number in parenthesis):

1. Locate the garage entry at the north end of the alley, or design the garage access to allow exiting only to the north. The N. 40th façade should retain maximum transparency and human activity. (A-4, A-5, A-8, C-5, D-2, D-8, D-11)
2. The applicant shall demonstrate to the DPD Land Use Planner how the garage entry relates to the overall building program, and the Land Use Planner shall determine which alley garage entry results in the design that better meets the Design Review Guidelines. (A-4, A-5, A-8, C-5, D-2, D-8, D-11)
3. The courtyard garage entry should be designed to encourage most of the access to the garage. (A-4, A-5, A-8, C-5, D-2, D-8, D-11)

4. The building shell material shall be revised to include a smooth panel rather than a textured panel. (A-2, C-2, C-4)
5. Provide a landscaped buffer edge at the south and west edges of the roof deck. The applicant shall demonstrate to the LU Planner how the landscape buffer will interrupt sight lines to adjacent residences but provide views of the skyline for hotel users. (A-5, E-3)

#### **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

No development standard departures were requested at the Recommendation meeting.

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